



# **THE POLISH—SOVIET FRONTIER**

by

**STANISLAW GRABSKI**

**THE INDO-POLISH LIBRARY**

# **"To Show India to Poland and Poland to India"**

## **THE INDO-POLISH LIBRARY**

					Rs. a. p.
I.P.L.	1.	FIRST TO FIGHT by Peter Jordan	1	4	0
"	2.	FIVE CENTURIES OF POLISH LEARNING by Prof. Stanislaw Kot ..	1	4	0
"	3.	POLAND'S PART IN THE WAR by F. C. Anstruther .. .. .	0	8	0
"	4.	ELEMENTS OF POLISH CULTURE by Paul Super .. .. .	1	0	0
"	5.	THE GROWTH OF POLISH DEMO- CRACY by Prof. William J. Rose ..	0	10	0
"	6.	THE PEOPLE OF POLAND by Bernard Newman .. .. .	0	10	0
"	7.	POLAND, RUSSIA AND GREAT BRITAIN by F. A. Voigt ...	0	8	0
"	8.	THE EASTERN BOUNDARIES OF POLAND by Prof. A. Bruce Boswell			
					<i>Out of print</i>
"	9.	POLAND AND RUSSIA by W. J. Weyers .. .. .	1	4	0

# THE POLISH-SOVIET FRONTIER

BY

STANISLAW GRABSKI

Professor of Political Economy at the University of Lwow  
Chairman of the Polish National Council

THE INDO-POLISH LIBRARY

No. IPI. 23

1944



The writer of this pamphlet is solely responsible for the opinions or proposals it contains. The responsibility of the Indo-Polish Library is limited to commending them to the readers as a contribution to the study.

*SOLE DISTRIBUTORS FOR INDIA :*  
**PADMA PUBLICATIONS LTD.**  
SIR PHIROZESHAH MEHTA ROAD,  
BOMBAY.

# THE POLISH-SOVIET FRONTIER

On August 23, 1939, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics concluded a Pact of Non-Aggression with Germany. Eight days later, Hitler, having by this Pact made sure that the attitude of Soviet Russia would be favourable to himself, launched his attack on Poland. Despite the enormous numerical and technical superiority of the German armies, Poland stubbornly defended itself. In the course of the first fortnight of the war the Polish Army suffered heavy losses, but it was constantly improving its methods of fighting armoured forces. From September 11 to 21 it offered fierce resistance at Kutno. On September 13, Lwow held the attacking German army in its suburbs and continued to defend itself successfully until the 22nd. The defence of Modlin lasted even longer, until the 28th, and the Germans did not enter Warsaw until October 1. They took Hel on October 2, while the remains of the Polish army held out at Kock until October 5.

However, in the middle of the fierce and ever more successful fighting which the Polish armies were carrying on against the German invader, the Soviet armies, without warning or provocation, crossed the Polish frontier on September 17. At that date the Germans had occupied the western half of Poland. The whole of the eastern half was still in possession of the Polish government and armed forces. A rainy autumn was

coming, as greatly desired by the Polish divisions which were reorganizing for a fresh war of movement east of the Bug, where the terrain was much less favourable for the motorized German *Blitzkrieg*. But all their plans and hopes were thwarted by the action of the Soviet armies in crossing the eastern frontier of Poland. It became obvious that victory over the Germans could be sought only in the west.

Pressed as they were from two sides—by the Germans in the west and the Russians in the east—the Polish armies, rather than lay down their arms, made their way through Roumania and Hungary to France. The President and Government of Poland left the country. Whatever may have been the faults and omissions of that Government, it remained to the end faithful to its alliance with Great Britain and France, and preserved intact the honour of the Polish State and nation. It passed the Polish-Roumanian frontier only when the entry of the Soviet forces into Poland had deprived the Polish army of all possibility for further resistance to the Germans.

The Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Molotov, issued a proclamation on September 17 announcing the armed occupation of the eastern half of Poland, not yet invaded by the Germans, in order that its inhabitants might be spared the horrors of war. And, indeed, by their action the Soviet authorities did shorten the military operations in Poland, perhaps, by a few months.

But the population of Lwow, at least, had quite another aim. Although on the 18th the city was already cut off from the rest of the country by Soviet forces which had advanced from the east, it success-

fully resisted the German attacks for another four days.

The Soviet-German Pact of August 23 was supplemented five weeks later by a further pact between the same two countries providing for the partition of Poland, the Germans taking 72,806 square miles with a population of 22 million, and the U.S.S.R. 77,620 square miles with a population of 13 million.

Thus the U.S.S.R., which had previously been separated from Germany by Poland, obtained a common frontier with Germany along the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line. And it was on this line that military operations began when Hitler attacked Soviet Russia on June 22, 1941.

Only four days later, on June 26, the German armies crossed the eastern frontier of the Polish Republic in its northern sector near Minsk, and ten days later, on July 2, in its southern sector on Volhynia .

The resistance offered to the German invaders by the much more numerous Soviet forces in the eastern half of Poland lasted only one-third as long as that offered by the less well-equipped Polish army in the smaller western half of the country, although in the east there was more room to manoeuvre.

It was not till they reached Smolensk and were fighting on their own soil that the Soviet armies resisted the German armoured divisions as fiercely as the Poles had done.

#### POLISH-SOVIET AGREEMENT OF JULY 30, 1941

On July 30, 1941, the following agreement was concluded between the Government of the Republic

of Poland and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics :

"(1) The Government of the U.S.S.R. recognizes the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 as to territorial changes in Poland as having lost their validity. The Polish Government declares that Poland is not bound by any agreement with any third power which is directed against the U.S.S.R.

(2) Diplomatic relations will be restored between the two Governments upon the signature of this Agreement and an immediate exchange of ambassadors will be arranged.

(3) The two Governments mutually agree to render one another aid and support of all kind in the present war against Hitlerite Germany.

(4) The Government of the U.S.S.R. expresses its consent to the formation on the territory of the U.S.S.R. of a Polish army under a commander appointed by the Polish Government, in agreement with the Soviet Government. The Polish army on the territory of the U.S.S.R. being subordinated—in an operational sense—to the Supreme Command of the U.S.S.R., in which the Polish army will be represented. All details as to command, organization and employment of this force will be settled in a subsequent Agreement.

(5) This Agreement will come into force immediately upon its signature and without ratification. The present Agreement is drawn up in two copies, each of them in the Russian and Polish languages. Both texts have equal force."

The following protocol is attached to the agreement :

"The Soviet Government grants an amnesty to all Polish citizens now detained on Soviet territory either as prisoners of war or on other sufficient grounds as from the resumption of diplomatic relations."

After this agreement had been signed, at the Foreign Office, Mr. Eden handed to General Sikorski the following note :

"On the occasion of the signature of the Polish-Soviet agreement of today's date, I desire to take the opportunity

of informing you that in conformity with the provisions of the agreement of mutual assistance between the United Kingdom and Poland of the 25 of August 1939, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have entered into no undertakings towards the U.S.S.R. which affect the relations between that country and Poland. I also desire to assure you that His Majesty's Government do not recognize any territorial changes which have been effected in Poland since August 1939."

Mr. Eden's declaration is clear. There is no ambiguity in it. It permits of no distorted interpretation. Great Britain does not recognize any territorial changes made in Poland since August 1939—including the detachment from Poland and the incorporation in the U.S.S.R. of the Polish provinces lying to the east of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line. And since the declaration was made immediately after the signature of the Polish-Soviet agreement, it has the force of an official commentary by H. M. Government on that agreement—in complete accord with the Polish interpretation thereof.

This was stated by General Sikorski when he handed to Mr. Eden the following reply :

"The Polish Government takes note of your letter dated July 30, 1941, and desires to express its sincerest satisfaction at the statement that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom do not recognize any territorial changes which have been effected in Poland since August 1939. This corresponds with the view of the Polish Government which, as previously informed His Majesty's Government, has never recognized any territorial changes effected in Poland since the outbreak of the present war."

A strictly legal analysis of Article I of the Polish-Soviet agreement permits of no other interpretation. The Government of the U.S.S.R., when admitting that

"the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 concerning territorial changes in Poland have lost their force," thereby admitted that the territorial changes made in Poland by virtue of those treaties have ceased to have any legal significance. For the reference in the Polish-Soviet agreement of July 30, could only be to the legality of the partition of Poland carried out by the U.S.S.R. in conjunction with Germany in September 1939, or to the legal claims of the U.S.S.R. to the Polish territory east of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line thereby assigned to it. Actually this territory was at that moment in German hands.

Article I of the Polish-Soviet agreement was not the only one to which the detachment from Poland of the eastern half of the Republic, annexed by the U.S.S.R. in September 1939, was repugnant.

This is clear also from Article 4, whereby the Soviet Government declares its assent to the raising, in the territory of the U.S.S.R., of a Polish army, whose commander is to be appointed by the Polish Government. For a Polish army could only be an army composed of Polish citizens. And the Poles from whom an army could be raised were those who had been deported into the centre of Russia from Polish districts occupied by virtue of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement. By acknowledging the Polish Government's right to raise an army in the territory of the U.S.S.R. from the inhabitants of those districts, the Soviet Government likewise acknowledged that they were Polish citizens, and that the districts in questions legally belonged to Poland.

The Polish citizenship of the inhabitants of the Polish provinces annexed by the U.S.S.R., in 1939 is still more

clearly asserted in the note added to the agreement. where it is said :

“The Soviet Government grants an amnesty to all Polish citizens now detained on Soviet territory. . .”

For at least 90 per cent of all Polish citizens who were deprived of their liberty within the territory of the U.S.S.R. came from those provinces.

The provisions of the agreement of July 30, 1941, were at first understood in this sense by the Soviet Government. As an eye-witness of the liberation of Polish citizens in August and September of that year from prisons, forced-labour camps, and places of compulsory settlement where they had been confined, and as one of those who thus regained his freedom, I must do the authorities of the N.K.V.D. justice. At that time, notwithstanding the great difficulties of communication caused by the war, they endeavoured as quickly as possible to restore the rights of free Polish citizens to the majority of those inhabitants of the eastern half of Poland arrested and deported between September 1939, and June 1941—irrespective of their nationality or religion. The only ones whom they retained in prisons and camps were Ukrainian Nationalist leaders, for the alleged reason that they were decidedly inclined to support Germany, and that if they were set at liberty, the Polish Embassy in the U.S.S.R. would have no means of preventing them from taking action injurious to the Allied cause.

### **Polish Army in the U.S.S.R.**

This state of affairs continued in October and November. In the first four months after the signing of the Polish-Soviet agreement some hundreds of thou-



sands of Polish citizens (including a considerable number belonging to national minorities) received their freedom and, with the co-operation of the Soviet authorities, at that time well-disposed towards them, were given Polish passports and cultural and material support by the Polish Embassy. Simultaneously the ranks of the Polish army were filled by about 46,000 volunteers from the Polish citizens (including many Jews and White Ruthenians, and a smaller number of Ukrainians) who had been released from prisons and camps. But in November the Commissar of the Kazak Republic, General Shcherbakov, issued an order that all Polish citizens of Ukrainian, White Ruthenian, and Jewish nationality, at liberty and fit for military service should be directed to the Red Army. To a protest made by the Polish Embassy, the Soviet Government replied in a note of December 1, in which it threw doubt upon the Polish citizenship of persons of Jewish, Ukrainian and White Ruthenian origin who had been deported from the eastern provinces of Poland during the Soviet occupation, "because the question of the frontiers of the U.S.S.R. and Poland is not yet settled, and is subject to revision in the future." On December 4, Stalin did, indeed, sign a declaration at the Kremlin with General Sikorski, to the effect that the relations of the Soviet and Polish Government would be based on "mutual honest observance of the undertakings they have assumed." Yet immediately after General Sikorski's departure from Russia the Soviet Government, in its notes to the Allied States concerning German atrocities began to mention Polish towns as if they were towns of the U.S.S.R. In 1942 it was made impossible for the Polish

Embassy to continue to protect Polish citizens; on January 16, 1943, the U.S.S.R. Government informed the Polish Embassy that it was withdrawing the right of Polish citizenship from all those whose possession of it had been previously acknowledged; and on April 26 it broke off diplomatic relations with Poland.

Although the Government of the U.S.S.R. thus failed to carry out the provisions of the Polish-Soviet agreement of July 30, 1941, it did not denounce the agreement, which accordingly remained in full force and effect. By that agreement the Soviet Government admitted that the German-Soviet treaties concerning territorial changes in Poland had lost their validity—and that the Ribbentrop-Molotov line partitioning Poland described in those treaties, had accordingly also lost its validity. But if the partition of Poland between Germany and the U.S.S.R. was no longer valid, then Poland continued legally to exist undivided as it had been before September 1939. And if it still existed, though temporarily under German occupation, and was recognized not only by Great Britain and the United States, but also by the U.S.S.R.—as was indicated by the mere fact that the Soviet Government concluded with it the agreement of July 30, 1941—then there was no common Soviet-German frontier. The Ribbentrop-Molotov line was never at any time the Polish-Soviet frontier. It was a Soviet-German frontier, drawn across Poland, which, as both the contracting parties asserted, had vanished from the surface of the earth and was never to reappear.

Doubts have, however, been raised from time to time by eminent American and British publicists as to Poland's right to her pre-war eastern frontier, though

this was undoubtedly determined by international treaty ; and whether it would not be fitter to take as frontier the Curzon Line.

As one of those who took part in the peace negotiations at Minsk and Riga which ended in the conclusion of the peace treaty of 1921, whereby the frontier between Poland and the U.S.S.R. was determined, I wish to state certain facts concerning the negotiations and the circumstances which preceded them, and also to give a certain number of geographical and historical details designed to enable my readers to judge for themselves which of the three lines that at different times have been proposed, is the most suitable : the Riga, the Curzon, or the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line.

## II

The Treaty of Versailles fixed the frontiers dividing restored Poland from Germany. The question of its eastern frontier was left for future decision by the Allied and Associated Powers.

This was done because whatever frontier between Poland and Soviet Russia might have been drawn on the map by the Peace Conference, it would not have been recognized by Russia, and in the existing circumstances the frontier could only be determined by direct understanding between Poland and Russia.

But meanwhile these two States were at war.

The Polish nation never recognized the partitions of the Republic carried out at the end of the 18th century by Prussia, Austria and Russia. It protested violently against them by the armed insurrections of 1794, 1806, 1830, 1848, and 1863. There was not a

generation of Poles but rose in arms to demonstrate to the world the right of the Polish nation to regain its liberty and reunite the territories torn apart by the annexing powers.

### **Lenin's Decree**

Accordingly, when all three dynasties that had partitioned Poland fell in 1918, the Polish people at last saw that the triumph of Right over Might was at hand, that the historic injury to their country by the partitions was about to be undone. This conviction was further strengthened by the decree of the People's Commissars signed by Lenin in August 1918 :

"All agreements and acts concluded by the Government of the former Russian Empire with the Governments of the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in connection with the partitions of Poland are annulled for ever by the present Resolution, in view of the fact that they are contrary to the principle of the self-determination of peoples and to the revolutionary legal conception of the Russian nation, which recognizes the inalienable right of the Polish nation to independence and unity."

When, however, after the capitulation of Germany its armies withdrew from the areas they had occupied in 1918, and which Russia had taken from Poland at the time of the partitions, these areas were immediately reoccupied by the Soviet armies moving westwards in pursuit of the retreating German forces and authorities. On the other hand, the Polish armies moved eastward. During 1919 they freed from Russian rule almost the whole of the area taken by Russia at the third partition, of 1795, and half of that taken at the second partition, in 1793.

Nevertheless Poland, though it had a perfect historical right to do so, did not incorporate all the pro-

vinces of the former Polish Republic it had freed. After driving back the Bolsheviki from Wilno, the head of the State and Commander-in-Chief, as he was at that time, Joseph Pilsudski, issued a manifesto on April 22, 1919, announcing a temporary administration of the country through local autonomous committees under Polish protection, until the people should have freely decided on their legal and political status for the future. In accordance with this, elections to Municipal Councils were held immediately in all the larger towns freed from Russian rule in 1919; and for the general administration of the country a special "Eastern Districts Committee" was set up, composed of local citizens. Still earlier—on March 21—The Polish Socialist Party had approached the Soviet Government with the proposal that both the Bolshevik and the Polish armies should be withdrawn from the area taken by Russia at the time of the partitions, in order that the population might decide their future allegiance by a free plebiscite. But the Soviet Government preferred to have the question of the Polish-Russian frontier settled by its armies.

In these circumstances the Allied Supreme Council issued the following declaration on December 8, 1919:

"The Principal Allied and Associated Powers, recognizing that it is important as soon as possible to put a stop to the existing conditions of political uncertainty, in which the Polish nation is placed, and without prejudicing the provisions which must in the future define the eastern frontiers of Poland, hereby declare that they recognize the right of the Polish Government to proceed, according to the conditions previously provided by the Treaty with Poland of June 28, 1919, to organize a regular administration of the territories of the former Russian Empire situated to the West of the line described below."

There follows a description of the line as shown on one of the map at the end of this book.

In conclusion the declaration went on :

“ The rights that Poland may be able to establish over the territories situated to the East of the said line are expressly reserved.”

On July 11, 1920, the British Government proposed the above line to the Soviets as an armistice line between Poland and Soviet Russia. The Polish Army was to withdraw to it, and the Russian Army to stand fifty kilometres to the east of it.

From that time the line has been called the “ Curzon Line.”

What was it actually ?

### **The Curzon Line**

In 1920 it was proposed by Lord Curzon to Poland and the Soviet Union as a line along which military operations were to cease, and not at all as a frontier line. The frontier was to be determined later by a peace conference which it was suggested should be held in London. But this proposal was rejected by the Soviet Government in its certainty of military victory. Indeed, its real aim was not so much to obtain of the best possible frontier for itself in the west, as the occupation of the whole of Poland and the establishment there of a communist government, the future members of which accompanied the Bolshevik armies on their march on Warsaw.

Attention may be drawn to the following sentences from an order of the day issued by General Tukha-

chevsky, Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet forces, on July 2, 1920 :

"In the west the fortunes of the world-revolution are at stake. Over the corpse of Poland lies the way to world-conflagration."

In 1919 the Supreme Council had fixed the above line provisionally, without prejudice to the final determination of the eastern frontier of Poland, as the boundary of the area to be regularly administered by Poland, while "the rights that Poland may be able to establish over the territories situated to the East of the said line" were "expressly reserved."

In view of the military situation between the Soviet Union and Poland at that time, any Polish-Soviet frontier drawn by the Supreme Council would have been unreal. Accordingly, the Supreme Council confined itself to determining the frontier of such indisputably Polish territory as was not questioned at that time either by the Bolsheviks or even by the so-called White *emigres* and the White armies of Kolchak, Denikin, and Wrangel. But at the same time it expressly admitted that Poland had claims to the territory in dispute with Russia, which she might put forward when her frontiers were being finally determined.

Neither His Majesty's Government in 1920, nor the Supreme Council in 1919 described the "Curzon Line" as a suitable Polish-Russian or Polish-Soviet frontier. It was intended only to delimitate indisputably Polish territory ; and beyond it to the east lay territory in dispute between Poland and the Soviet Union—or the Russian Empire, for many governments in Europe at that time were still counting on the victory of the Russian White generals.

What was the origin of this line dividing the Polish provinces of "the former Russian Empire" into lands indisputably Polish and land in dispute between Poland and Russia?

### **Some Facts from the Past**

Its genesis lies in the history of the three partitions of Poland, of 1772, 1793 and 1795.

The Duchy of Warsaw was created by Napoleon when he concluded the Treaty of Tilsit with Czar Alexander I. This Duchy comprised part of the territory taken from Poland by Prussia at the first partition, as well as the territory taken by it at the second and third partitions, with the exception of the district of Bialystok, which Napoleon presented to Czar. In 1809 the Duchy recovered from Austria the districts which the latter had taken from Poland at the time of the third partition. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 took from the Duchy and returned to Prussia the two Provinces of Poznan and Bydgoszcz forming the remainder of the Duchy into the so-called Kingdom of Poland, under the same crown as Russia.

The Kingdom of Poland, although incorporated in Russia under a common monarch, was nevertheless a separate State. Its constitution was quite different from that of Russia. Whereas Russia was an absolute monarchy, the Kingdom of Poland had parliamentary representation, in accordance with three hundred years of Polish tradition. (Parliamentary government had been established in Poland at the beginning of the sixteenth century.) The Kingdom also had a separate government (except for the Ministry of Foreign



Affairs), and a separate army. The Czar took the title of King of Poland, and Alexander I's successor, Nicholas I, had himself solemnly crowned at Warsaw in 1825. He was, however, an oriental despot, hating parliamentary institutions, and he restricted constitutional liberties in the Kingdom of Poland by the most various measures. This led to ever-increasing excitement among the Polish community, and when, in 1830, he determined to use the Polish army for the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty in France (where it had been dethroned by the people), and for crushing the revolution which had broken out in Belgium, the National Revolution occurred in Warsaw.

The numerical superiority of the Russian armies was, however, too great. After suppressing the revolution, Czar Nicholas I abolished the Diet of the Kingdom of Poland, and its separate Council of Ministers, and appointed the Russian Field-Marshal Paskevich governor, with absolute authority. The separate Bank of Poland was, however, retained, along with the Polish currency, the Code Napoleon (introduced by the Grand Duchy of Warsaw), the Polish educational system (apart from the university of Warsaw, which was abolished because so many students had taken part in the insurrection), the description "Kingdom of Poland," and the previously-existing boundaries. Paskevich introduced a military government with hardly any but Russians in the higher posts, but he made no attempt to russify the Polish community. In the schools instruction continued to be given by Polish teachers in Polish; in the law-courts Polish judges still conducted trials in Polish, and the majority of the lower and middle grades of officials was composed of Poles.

In 1863 a fresh insurrection broke out in the Kingdom. After its suppression the Russian Government began the russification of the whole administration (including even local administration), the judicial, and the educational, systems throughout the Kingdom. In all the class-rooms and corridors of the Warsaw secondary schools notices were posted up in Russian to the effect that "speaking Polish within the walls of the school is forbidden." (None the less, during the nine years in which I attended secondary school at Warsaw I never heard my schoolfellows speaking anything but Polish. I was occasionally punished with a few hours in the school *carcer* for speaking Polish, but that was all.) Yet the Czar retained the title of King of Poland, and the boundaries of the Kingdom remained unchanged. After Russia had received a Constitution, none but Poles were elected to the Duma to represent the Kingdom, at four successive elections; they constituted a homogeneous Polish bloc.

## THE LAST WAR

When the last war broke out in 1914, Germany and Russia tried to outbid each other with the promises they made to the Polish nation. On November 5, 1916, Germany and Austria-Hungary announced the erection of the Kingdom of Poland into "an independent State with an hereditary monarchy and a constitutional government," and set up a Polish Regency Council, which immediately proceeded to establish a Polish administration under the control of the occupying military authorities. On the Russian side a number of declarations were made, by the commander-in-chief, the premier, the minister for foreign affairs, and

finally by the Czar himself, promising the reunion of the whole Polish nation, and the grant to it of the right freely to organize its own national, social, and economic institutions. These promises were definitely formulated by Prince Lvov, Prime Minister in the government established in March 1917, after Nicholas II had been dethroned. In a manifesto addressed to the Poles he assured them that "the Russian nation, which has thrown off the yoke, admitted the full right of the Polish brother-nation to decide its own fate according to its own will." Moreover, he promised aid in the "establishment of an independent Polish State."

In fact, however, the Russian revolutionary government was unable to give the Polish nation any aid against the Germans, who still retained possession of the provinces of Poznan and Pomerania (Pomorze), which had been detached from the Grand Duchy of Warsaw by the Congress of Vienna ; or against the Austrians, who likewise had no intention of giving up Galicia. For the Revolution had seriously disorganized the Russian Army, in which soldiers' councils had been immediately introduced and had removed, and sometimes even murdered, their officers.

In point of fact, Prince Lvov's declaration was equivalent to the recognition by Russia that the union established by the Congress of Vienna between the Congress Kingdom and the Russian Empire has ceased to exist.

On the Map of the historical frontiers are shown :  
(a) the frontiers of Poland before the Partitions,  
(b) the frontiers of the Polish Kingdom 1815, (c) the Curzon Line. From a comparison of these three lines it is evident that the Supreme Council on December

3, 1919, acknowledged as indisputably Polish the territories taken from Poland by Austria and Prussia at the time of the three partitions with the exception of the Danzig area, while those taken by Russia in 1772, 1793, and 1795 were regarded as in dispute.

For the Curzon Line marks almost exactly the limit of Russia's 18th-century acquisitions, or in other words the eastern border of the Kingdom of Poland plus only the district of Bialystok, presented to Alexander by Napoleon in 1807.

Of course, the Supreme Council could not deny to Poland the right to claim the return of the provinces taken from it by Russia at the partitions, when it recognized the recovery by Poland of all the territories (except a small piece at the mouth of the Vistula) taken from it by Austria and Prussia when these States and Russia partitioned Poland. So it expressly reserved "the rights that Poland may be able to establish over the territories situated to the East of the said line."

### III.

What were these rights that Poland might properly claim to territories lying east of the Curzon Line, *i.e.*, to the territories taken from it by Russia between 1772 and 1795 ?

If I am to give an exact answer to this question, I must be permitted first to give a short account of the circumstances under which these territories originally came to be included within the frontiers of the Polish Republic.

In the 10th century, out of the numerous Slavonic tribes inhabiting the area between the Elbe and the

Dnieper three States were formed: the Ruthenian, on the Dnieper; the Polish, on the Oder and the Vistula; and the Czech. But in the 12th century the Ruthenian State fell apart into numerous petty duchies. In 1170 there were seventy-two of them. Simultaneously, however, the Ruthenian dukes subdued the Finno-Turanian tribes dwelling between the upper reaches of the Dnieper and the Volga. There a number of new Ruthenian duchies came into being, the strongest of which was the duchy of Suzdal, near Moscow. In the middle of the 13th century all these Ruthenian duchies were subjugated by the Mongols, who ruled over them for two hundred years, without, however, modifying their political or ecclesiastical structure. They contented themselves with the exercise of a general suzerainty and supervision over the Ruthenian dukes and the exaction of tribute from them.

A hundred years later, however, the powerful Mongol empire, created by the military genius of Genghis Khan, had begun to decay. In the 14th century suzerainty over the Ruthenian dukes was exercised by the khans of the "Golden Horde," who led a nomad life on the Volga steppes. By their astute policy, taking advantage of the quarrels between individual Tartar leaders and securing their support, the Muscovite dukes gradually obtained authority, by conquest or dynastic union, over an ever-increasing number of north-east Ruthenian duchies.

At this same time Lithuania, a not very numerous but warlike pagan nation, made its appearance on the stage of history. The Lithuanian dukes, taking advantage of the decay of the Mongol empire, tore from it increasingly large areas which had belonged to the old

Ruthenian duchies on the Dnieper, and extended their dominion southwards to Kiev and beyond. In the second half of the 14th century the majority of the population of Lithuania was composed of Ruthenian Slavs. Wilno became the capital. The influence of the Ruthenian knightage made itself increasingly felt at the courts of the Lithuanian dukes, and the White-Ruthenian language was more and more used. While Moscow became the rallying point for the mixed Slavonic and Finno-Turanian peoples of the north-east Ruthenian districts in their struggle against Tartar domination, the purely Slavonic west and south-west Ruthenian tribes came together under the rule of the Lithuanian dukes who had liberated them from the Mongol yoke.

The tribes of what is now called White Ruthenia and the Ukraine maintained a certain political and cultural contact, from the middle of the 10th to the end of the 13th century, with those of Great Russia, who were ruled by Muscovite dukes. After that, however, until the time of the partitions of Poland in the 18th century, the paths of their cultural development completely diverged, and three separate languages came into being. Russian, in the Muscovite dominions; White-Ruthenian, to the north of the Pripet, and Ukrainian, on the lower Dnieper. The Great Russian always spoke of themselves as *Ruskiye*, which Latin writers trans-literated as *Russi*; whereas the Ukrainians formerly called themselves *Rusyny*, which Latin writers modified into *Rutheni*. Since the end of the 19th century, however, in order to mark more clearly their difference from the Great Russians, the southern Ruthenians have begun to call themselves "Uk-

rainians" The White-Ruthenian language is undoubtedly more akin phonetically to Polish than to Russian. From the middle of the 19th century onwards the Russian Czars did their utmost to stifle this Ukrainian and White-Ruthenian feeling that they were a people distinct from the Great Russians, and they put forward the official view that the Ukrainian and White-Ruthenian languages were merely dialects of Russian. This conception however, did not survive the fall of the Czars. This event was immediately followed by the creation of a provisional Ukrainian government at Kiev: an Ukrainian Soviet, which replaced Russian by Ukrainian as the language of the administration, schools and army. But even in the 14th century neither the White-Ruthenian nor the Ukrainian knights had felt any consciousness or desire, of unity with Moscow.

## POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH

Lithuania increased in power and united more and more of the old Ruthenian duchies under its dominion, not without considerable aid from their inhabitants. But at the same time its relations with the still powerful Tartars became inflamed, and an increasingly aggressive attitude towards it was taken up by the Order of Teutonic Knights, which had made itself master of Pomerania (Pomorze) and East Prussia. Consequently Lithuania was brought to the conclusion that its own forces were insufficient for successful defence, and that if it were to acquire permanent allies it must renounce paganism and enter the community of Christian civilized nations. It had only to choose whether it would receive Christianity from Catholic

Poland or from Orthodox Moscow. It chose Poland. In 1385 a congress of Polish and Lithuanian Notables was held at the Lithuanian town of Krewo, where it was decided that Lithuania should be dynastically united with Poland by the marriage of the Lithuanian duke Jagiello [who at baptism took the purely Polish name of Wladyslaw (Ladislas)] with the fifteen-year-old Polish queen Jadwiga, who had been crowned three years before.

This dynastic union of the two countries, though at first intended to be exclusively political, soon began to change into a social and cultural union. The mere fact that Lithuania voluntarily received the Christian faith from Polish hands—the first clergy in the country were Polish—caused the Lithuanian knights to take a keen interest in Polish manners and customs.

This, in turn, led to the holding of another congress of Polish and Lithuanian Notables, at Horodlo, on the Bug, in 1413, on which occasion the Roman-Catholic knights of Lithuania (and later the Orthodox also) were received into the Polish knightly clans (*zwiazki herbowe*). This was the beginning of a process which lasted fifty years, whereby the knights and burghers of Lithuanian, White Ruthenia, and the Ukraine were incorporated ever more closely in a cultural community with those of Poland, whose civilization was quite distinct from that of Moscow. In 1569 the united Lithuanian and Polish Diets changed the dynastic union into a more far-reaching one. From that time onwards there was only one parliament for the united Republic, one legislature, an uniform currency, a single customs system, and a single college for the election of kinds. The treasuries and armies of Poland and Lithuania still



remained distinct. For a certain time also, the official language of Lithuania continued to be White-Ruthenian, which was still spoken by the majority of the knights. But the Act of Union was drawn up in Polish. The Union was at first opposed by the Lithuanian Magnates, but was strongly supported by the smaller nobility and gentry, and more particularly by the White-Ruthenian and Ukrainian sections. The last-named, indeed, went so far as to incorporate in Poland and south-eastern districts inhabited by them. It was also accepted by the great lords from the formerly separate Ruthenian and Lithuanian duchies, who were above all afraid of Moscow, which was constantly at war with Lithuania. They saw their only hope of successful resistance in the closest relations with Poland.

In the 17th century not only the whole of the Lithuanian and White-Ruthenian nobility and gentry, but also the White-Ruthenian burgher class, adopted the Polish language. In the 18th century Lithuania and its White-Ruthenian dependencies were incorporated with Poland as closely as is Wales today with England. The Lithuanian and White-Ruthenian languages were still spoken only by the peasants in their villages, whereas the educated classes used only Polish. The sermons and hymns in churches were also in Polish. The feeling of Polish patriotism was just as great in the regions of former Lithuania and of the old Ruthenian tribes on the Niemen and the Dnieper as on the Vistula and the Warta. Accordingly, after the first partition of Poland in 1772, Lithuania was finally made into one homogeneous State with Poland, on May 3, 1791. The insurrection directed simultaneously against Prussia and

Russia in 1794 was headed by Kosciuszko, who came from White Ruthenia and was undoubtedly of White-Ruthenian origin. The main centres of the insurrection were Cracow, Warsaw, and Wilno.

## PARTITIONS OF POLAND

The partitions of Poland led to the amalgamation of the eastern provinces of the Republic with the Russian Empire. But Polish civilization long maintained its position there. The Empress Catharine, who carried out the partitions in conjunction with Prussia and Austria, attempted to introduce the official use of the Russian language throughout the territory she had annexed; but her son Paul restored the use of Polish, which was maintained likewise by Czar Alexander I. It was during the reign of the latter that the Polish University of Wilno attained its greatest splendor, and another Polish institute of higher learning was founded under the name of the "Lyceum" at the Volhynia town of Krzemieniec, while numerous Polish secondary schools sprang up in all the larger towns of the country.

After the failure of the insurrection of 1830, in which men from the provinces of Wilno and Volhynia took a distinguished part, Czar Nicholas I, abolished Polish institutes of learning everywhere except in the Kingdom of Poland, and began the russification of the districts annexed at the time of the partitions by the compulsory conversion of the Uniates or Greek Catholics to the Orthodox faith. Nevertheless not only the nobility, gentry, and burghers, but even the peasants of Wilno province rose in large numbers in 1863. That province also produced the most eminent leader of the

insurrection, namely Traugutt, and Pilsudski, the creator of the Polish Legions during the last world war.

It was not only army leaders, however, who grew up in the eastern provinces of the Republic. Until quite recently they produced also outstanding figures in the progress of Polish civilization: the two greatest Polish poets, Mickiewicz and Slowacki; the most distinguished musicians, Moniuszko and Paderewski; a number of eminent novelists: Rzewuski, Kraszewski, Orzeszkowa, and Rodziewiczówna; the well-known scholars Jan and Jędrzej Sniadecki; and very many others.

After the insurrection of 1863 had been crushed, the pressure of russification increased enormously. The speaking of Polish in all public buildings and the sale of land to Poles were forbidden. A Pole might not even purchase a piece of ground from another Pole. All Polish cultural associations were abolished. Teaching in the schools was conducted only in Russian. The government introduced large numbers of Russian merchants and industrialists, who alone received government contracts. The children of educated burgher families remained Polish in spite of the pressure exerted by the administration and the schools. But the children of the peasants, whose parents spoke White-Ruthenian at home, succumbed and were easily russified by the schools.

In the course, therefore, of the forty years from 1864 to the beginning of the present century Russian nationalism and civilization took root to a certain extent in the consciousness of the broad masses of the people torn from Poland by Russia at the partitions.

None the less, the tradition not only of Polish civilization, but of Polish nationality, continued to have strong influence. In 1906, the first parliamentary elections in the Russian Empire were held. These districts—declared by the Czarist government to have been Russian from time immemorial—returned twenty Polish members.

## POLISH INFLUENCE IN THE EAST

When Nicholas II granted a constitution to his own State, he at the same time introduced into the provinces taken from Poland provincial autonomous councils (Polish *ziemstwa*, Russian *zemstva*) which had already existed in Russia for some fifty years. There were counties (*Powiaty*) in which the Poles had (a) 35-45 percent, (b) 45-55 percent, (c) over 55 percent of the votes in the *Zemstvos* (Local Government Councils). In a large area of the country the local White Ruthenian and Ukrainian population bestowed their full confidence on the Polish representatives. This fact so alarmed the Russian Government that it endeavoured to prevent the collapse of its russification policy by dividing the electors to the *zemstva* into the two national groups, Polish and Russian, all Ukrainians and White Ruthenians being counted as belonging to the latter, so that they might not in future elect Poles.

After the fall of the Czars in February 1917, an end was put to all the restrictions which had up to that time hampered the social and cultural initiative of the Polish, White-Ruthenian, and Ukrainian population in the annexed provinces of the former Polish Republic. The Poles immediately took occasion to orga-

nize their national system of elementary schools. In the course of one year they organized several thousand schools.

The White-Ruthenian, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian populations lived in free association with Poland—at first a dynastic union and later a Commonwealth—for almost 500 years. To Russia they were bound by annexation and armed force for 130 years. Poland never endeavoured to polonize them by force. They voluntarily adopted the Western-European civilization of Poland, as being higher than their own. Russia throughout the ninety years after 1830 used every method of compulsion open to the administration in the provinces taken at the time of the partitions, to annihilate every trace of their former union with the Polish State and Polish civilization, and to make of them a purely Russian country.

The introduction by the Russian government of separate Polish and Russian electoral groups afforded official confirmation that the country had not become Russian despite all that had been done to make it, but was a country of mixed nationalities, in which the Polish civilization exerted strong influence.

In view of these facts the Supreme Council in December 1919, could not deny Poland's rights to the territories situated east of the Curzon Line. Whereas it recognized the territories of the Polish Republic to the west of that line as indisputably Polish, it regarded the districts taken by Russia in the course of the three partitions (as already said) as in dispute between Poland and Russia.

## IV

There were two possible methods of settling the question of the territories in dispute between Poland and Russia.

These territories were of mixed Polish, White-Ruthenian, and Russian population; of Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian. Poland had historical rights to them by virtue of their 500 years of voluntary union with her. Russia put forward claims to them because of their attachment to the Russian Empire throughout the last 130 years. One method would have been to divide the area in question between Poland and the Soviet Union; the other, to erect White Ruthenia and the Ukraine into buffer States, which would themselves determine their relationship to Poland on the one hand and to Russia on the other; either entering into a union with one or other of them, or deciding to remain completely independent, legally and politically.

### PILSUDSKI'S POLICY

This second idea was supported by Marshal Pilsudski, at that time Head of the Polish State, who gave expression to his views in his proclamation "To the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania" of April 19, 1919.

"For a hundred and twenty years your country has known no freedom under the pressure of hostile power, Russian, German or Bolshevik, which without consulting the people has imposed upon them foreign modes of action, hampering the exercise of the will and often destructive to your manner of life. This state of constant slavery—which I personally know well, since I was born in this unhappy land—must at last be brought to an end; and at last this land, forgotten as it seems of God, must win its freedom

and the full right to declare its aims and needs without fear. The Polish Army, which I have led here to overthrow the rule of violence and superior force, and to put an end to the government of the country against the will of its people, brings liberty and freedom of action to all of you. I desire to make it possible for you to deal with internal affairs and decide questions of nationality and religion for yourselves, without suffering any violence or pressure from the side of Poland. And so, although guns are still firing and blood is still flowing in your country, I am not introducing a military administration, but a civil one composed of native sons of this land."

The most ardent upholders of Pilsudski's policy were to be found in the Polish Socialist Party.

At that time I was Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Diet. Personally I had grave doubts respecting the feasibility of this programme. In 1917 and 1918 I had travelled through the length and breadth of the Ukraine and had reached the conviction that Ukrainian national consciousness existed at that time only among a small intellectual minority, while to the masses of peasants and workers it was still completely foreign. When the weak Bolshevik army (comprising less than 10,000 bayonets) attacked Kiev at the end of December 1917, it was defended by about 4,000 "free Cossacks" under Hetman Petlura. But the 500,000 inhabitants of the city looked on, to see who would win, with about as much interest as a crowd at a football match. They were afraid of the Bolsheviks, but they did not identify themselves with the Ukrainian Nationalist movement. Among the White Ruthenians the desire for a separate state was still weaker. Religious consciousness was stronger among them than national consciousness. The Catholics had a distinct feeling of fellowship with Catholic Poland,

whereas the Orthodox felt rather their kinship with Russia.

So neither the Ukraine nor White Ruthenia had sufficient strength to support an independent régime of its own. Were such to be set up, Poland would have to defend its separate existence against Russia: a task beyond the powers of a Polish State which was in the throes of reconstruction after more than a century of political subjection. Further, the question of Polish aid for an independence movement in the Ukraine was enormously complicated by the fact that less than half the territory had belonged to Poland before the partitions, the part situated to the east of the Dnieper having detached itself from Poland at the end of the 17th century and put itself under the rule of the "Orthodox Czar." To make an independent State out of only half of the Ukraine would be unjust. But to detach the whole of the country from Russia would have meant the exclusion of the latter from access to the Black Sea and to its richest coal and iron deposits, and the consequent end of its economic self-sufficiency. To that Russia would never have agreed. An independent Ukraine created by Polish armed force and not by the will and force of its own people would have been the cause of endless antagonism between Russia and Poland.

## FEDERATIVE PROGRAMME

Consistently with my constant political activity on the side of England, France and Russia against the Central Powers throughout the 1914-1918 period, which had compelled me (for I was an Austrian subject) to leave Galicia for Russia in 1915, I regarded as the main



task of Polish international policy the amicable solution of the frontier question with Russia, red or white, in order that Poland might be free to concentrate all her strength on preparation for meeting the German counter-attack which was sure to come sooner or later. But I must confess that I had the determined support of only the right wing of the Diet, its left being just as strongly in favour of Pilsudski's scheme, while the centre hesitated. This was not, after all, surprising, for both sentimental considerations and the loftiest traditions of the Polish struggle "For our freedom and yours," favoured a programme which proposed to liberate from Russian rule, no matter whether Czarist or Bolshevik, the territories torn from the Polish Republic in 1772, 1793, and 1795, and to give their populations full freedom to decide their own political future. Further, the whole left wing was certain, and the majority of the centre confidently hoped that, if Poland by armed force aided the Ukraine and White Ruthenia to gain their political independence, they would, in gratitude, voluntarily enter an union with Poland such as existed at the end of the 14th century, or at least make a permanent alliance with her. Accordingly, Pilsudski's programme was widely known among the Polish public as the "Federative," or "Jagiellonian" programme.

An alleged federative programme was likewise being brought from the east by the Bolshevik army. It too favoured the creation of a White-Ruthenian and an Ukrainian Republic. But it was intended that these republics should be communist and closely united to Russia; so closely, indeed, that their supposed independence would have been more like the local government

of an English country than the government of a British Dominion under the Statute of Westminster.

### SOVIETS OFFER POLAND MORE

However, when the Polish-Soviet military operations took a turn unfavourable to the Red Army, the Soviet Government proposed peace negotiations on the basis of a division of the White-Ruthenian and Ukrainian areas between Poland and Russia. In a note addressed to the Head of the Polish State and signed by Lenin and Chicherin the Soviet Government made the following declaration.

"The Council of People's Commissars declares that the Red Army will not cross the present line of the White-Ruthenian front, running near the following points: Dryssa, Dzisna, Polotsk, Borysov, Parichi, Ptich station, and Byelokorovich. As regards the Ukrainian front the Council of People's Commissars declares in its own name and in the name of the Provisional Government of the Ukraine that the Soviet armies will not engage in military operations to the west of the present line, of Cudnov, Pilava, Derazhnya and Bar."

"The Council of People's Commissars considers that so far as the essential interests of Poland and Russia are concerned, there is not a single question, territorial, economic, or other, that could not be solved in a peaceful way through negotiation, mutual concessions or agreement. . . ."

The Council of People's Commissars accordingly considered in January 1920, the Polish-Russian frontier along the line from Dryssa to Bar, would not be injurious to "the real interests of Russia," notwithstanding that this line is considerably to the east of the frontier, fixed by the Treaty of Riga in 1921.

### ATTITUDE OF POLISH DIET

Likewise in the opinion of the majority of the Polish Diet it was not injurious to the real interests of

Poland. Even the adherents of the "federative" programme, led by Daszynski, chairman of the Polish Socialist Party, declared themselves in favour of the acceptance of the Soviet offer of negotiation, if a clause were inserted in the protocol proposing that the frontier between Poland and Russia should be dependent on the will of the inhabitants of the territory in dispute. At that time I brought about a compromise between the parties of the left and of the right. The Foreign Affairs Committee, after an exhaustive discussion in the presence of the Prime Minister and the Chief of the General Staff, unanimously passed a resolution, in which it declared :

"The Polish Government in answer to the Note of the Russian Soviets puts forward the principles on the basis of which it is ready to enter into peace negotiations, and the acceptance of which by Russia would secure a permanent eastern frontier for the Republic and its international status. . . . The demarcation of the two States must be carried out in accordance with the desires and interests of the actual population [of the areas concerned]. This has for long been the attitude of the Government and Diet of the Polish Republic. The Polish Republic is unalterably resolved to fix its eastern frontier in agreement with the local population and has the right and duty to demand likewise that the population of those districts which are situated beyond the present boundary of Polish administration, but belonged to Poland before 1772, be given the opportunity of freely deciding their own future allegiance."

Marshal Pilsudski was not very pleased with this resolution. For at that very time there had come to Warsaw a delegation from the Ukrainian Nationalist army, which under Hetman Petlura was fighting in the Ukraine against the numerically superior Red Army, to ask for aid. In the course of several conversations

I had with Pilsudski, I warned him that Petlura was deluding both himself and Poland when he promised a general outburst of Ukrainian patriotism if the Ukrainian people saw the Polish Army coming to their aid. To that kind of argument Pilsudski for a long time had only one answer: "Refusal of aid to a nation with whom we lived in a voluntary union for five hundred years would be an indelible stain on Polish honor."

But when I came to him with Premier Skulski and Daszynski, the leader of the left wing in the Diet, to tell him that the whole of the Diet regarded the Soviet proposal as likely to lead to a permanent understanding with Russia about the territories in dispute between it and Poland, and therefore thought that peace negotiations should be commenced at once, and the Ukrainians helped to gain their national liberty by these negotiations and not by armed action, Marshal Pilsudski agreed, and proposed to the Soviet Government that peace delegations from Russia and from Poland should meet at the town of Borysov.

## INSINCERITY OF SOVIET PROPOSAL

Unfortunately, however, the Soviet General Staff, more strongly influenced it seems by Trotsky than by Lenin, gathered a large force near Borysov, and agreed to negotiate only in order to lull Polish watchfulness, and to gain time to defeat General Wrangel's White Army, before throwing all its forces against Poland. For this reason the Soviet Government firmly refused to conduct peace negotiations at Borysov. This refusal served to convince not only Marshal Pilsudski's staff, but also the leaders of the left and centre in the Diet, of the insincerity of the whole of the Soviet peace pro-

posals. They therefore authorized Pilsudski to send armed aid to Petlura. Having learnt this, I called upon the Foreign Affairs Committee to renew their demand for peace negotiations, though at some other place than Borysov. However, this time I and the members of my party found ourselves in a minority, so that I had to resign as chairman.

It was not till a few months later, when my warnings against exaggerating the influence of Ukrainian nationalism on the masses of the Ukrainian people had, unfortunately, been justified, that the Foreign Affairs Committee re-elected me chairman.

I was decidedly opposed to Pilsudski's offensive against Kiev. And afterwards, at the time of his *coup d'etat* in 1926, I fought against him. But I must do justice to his memory. Pilsudski's doubts as to the sincerity of the Soviet peace proposals at that time were well-founded, and it is not right to accuse him of imperialistic designs of conquest. He was in truth a chivalrous defender of "our freedom and of yours." He was perfectly sincere when he said in his manifesto to the Ukrainian people of April 26, 1920 :

"The Polish armies will clear the territory inhabited by the Ukrainian nation from the foreign invaders against whom the Ukrainian people have risen in arms, in defence of their homes against violence, robbery and pillage. The Polish armies will remain in the Ukraine until such time as a truly Ukrainian government is able to take over the administration. As soon as armed bodies of Ukrainians stand on the border, capable of defending the country against a fresh invasion and as soon as the free Ukrainian nation is in position to decide its own fate, Polish soldiers will withdraw behind the frontier of the Polish Republic."

## POLISH ARMY TAKES KIEV

The Ukrainian people were favourably disposed to the Polish armies which were driving the Bolshevik armies and administration from the country. for the Bolsheviks forcibly took from the Ukrainian peasants their grain and cattle. for the relief of starving Moscow. But it was a far cry from mere favourable disposition to armed co-operation. There was, in fact, no such co-operation, despite the promises of Petlura and the assurances of the Ukrainian Nationalist leaders; although Pilsudski was joined for a time by Hetman Makhno, an extreme radical, with whom the Bolsheviks had so far been unable to deal, owing to the support he received from the Ukrainian peasants. Pilsudski was compelled to carry on the struggle for Ukrainian independence almost exclusively with Polish forces. He began on April 28, and by May 8 he had already taken Kiev. But with it he also occupied an extensive area of territory. And the forces of which he disposed amounted to little more than 300,000 bayonets and sabres. The more the front line in the Ukraine was extended, the thinner it became, for the volunteers who had been expected from the local population did not arrive in sufficient numbers. And by thus giving armed aid to Petlura, Pilsudski greatly weakened the reserves which otherwise he might have used for strengthening the northern, so-called White-Ruthenian, sector of the front. Meanwhile it was from this sector that the commander-in-chief of the Red armies operating against Poland, General Tukhachevsky, delivered his main counter-offensive. The Polish armies had to withdraw.

## BRITISH MEDIATION

In July the British Government endeavoured to mediate between Poland and the Soviet Union, proposing, in a note of July 11 1920, an armistice on the so-called Curzon Line and the holding "in London in the near future of a conference of representatives from Soviet Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Finland for the purpose of concluding a final peace with Soviet Russia." However, the Soviet Government declined the mediation of Great Britain, declaring, in its note of July 17, 1920, that it regards the Curzon Line as a proposition of "imperialists in London and Paris," unjust toward Poland and is ready to grant to Poland, through direct negotiation, a more advantageous frontier. It also refused to stop its military operations.

The Polish Government, however, desired to fulfill the obligation it had taken upon itself in the presence of the Allied Powers at Spa in the first half of July, and agreed to negotiate with the Soviets even within the area of military operations and on the territory of the Soviet administration, at Minsk.

On August 14, therefore, a peace delegation left Warsaw for Minsk. It was composed of representatives of all parties in the Diet, of whom I was one, under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Jan Dabski.

On that same day began the three days' battle of Warsaw, which ended in complete victory for the Poles.

## MINSK PEACE CONFERENCE

The Bolshevik authorities did not make the Polish delegation's path easy. We only arrived at Minsk on

the third day, when the retreat of the Soviet armies had already began. Everything possible was done to prevent us learning the result of the battle. We were assigned to a house with a garden surrounded by a high wood-fence. Outside were sentries who did not allow the local population to come into the least contact with us. We were not allowed to go into the town. We were *de facto* interned. The Russian newspapers which reached Minsk contained no war news at all. We had, indeed, a portable wireless transmitter and receiving set which we had brought with us for communication with our government at Warsaw. But at the hours appointed for our talks "atmospherics" invariably caused such disturbance as to make communication impossible. But from all this we drew the conclusion that things must be going badly for the Bolsheviks at the front. And five days after our arrival one of our wireless operators succeeded in catching part of a war-communicé broadcast from Warsaw. From it we learnt that the Bolshevik armies were in full retreat, having lost hundreds of guns and tens of thousands of prisoners. However, the Bolshevik delegation expected we would be disheartened by the treatment we had received on the way to Minsk and after our arrival; so on August 19, its chairman, Danishevsky, laid before us the draft of a peace treaty which would have made Poland a political vassal of the Soviet Union. The armed forces of the Republic were to be limited to 50,000 men, of whom the 10,000 might compose the regular army, while the remaining 40,000 were to be a militia consisting exclusively of workers. Further, the whole equipment of the existing Polish army, except for light arms for the above-



mentioned 50,000, was to be handed over to the Soviet Union. The complete demobilization of Polish war industry was to follow. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was to maintain an army of 200,000 on the Polish frontier. The frontier between Poland and the Soviet Union was to follow, with slight divergences, the line of the third partition of Poland; that is to say, it was to be slightly more favourable to Poland than the Curzon Line. Further, the Soviet Union was to have the right of free transit through Poland both for persons and goods; which in practice would have meant the right to send armies across Poland to the aid of German communists.

## BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

The Polish delegation asked for time to prepare its answer. In order to make us more inclined to concession, on the next day, August 20, a manifesto by General Tukhachevsky, commander-in-chief of the Soviet armies, was posted up in the streets of Minsk. accusing the Polish delegation of having "disturbed the peace in the most disgraceful manner. The Polish delegation, composed exclusively of spies and counter-espionage agents, is attempting to utilize its position for purposes of espionage." To increase the effect of this proclamation the commander of the local Cheka came to the chairman of the Polish delegation and informed him that he would defend us to the best of his ability against the indignant mobs, but doubted whether he would succeed. That same day, however, we got the above-mentioned fragment of the Warsaw broadcast. So at the next meeting of the peace conference our chairman first and foremost lodged a strong

protest against General Tukhachevsky's insulting manifesto, and then declared that we absolutely rejected the Soviet proposals, which were designed to destroy the sovereignty of the Polish Republic and impose upon it the unilateral will of the Soviet Union, as though it were victor and Poland vanquished; whereas in point of fact it was the other way round. Having seen that we must know the true state of things at the front, Danishevsky changed his tone, expressed his regret for General Tukhachevsky's tactless procedure, and affirmed that his draft treaty was not final, but was merely a basis for discussion. Further discussion, however, turned out to be impossible, since the Soviet delegation was composed of third-rate yes-men, who dared not say anything which was not strictly within the limits of the instructions they had been given by Moscow. The negotiations therefore came to a deadlock. To save the situation there came to Minsk for semi-official talks with members of the Polish delegation the communist Radek, of Polish-Jewish origin, who at that time played a considerable role at Moscow.

With him we came to the conclusion that the scene of the peace negotiations should be transferred to a neutral country. At the same time we told him that Poland did not feel called upon to intervene in the domestic affairs of Russia, that it was accordingly not waging war in aid of Wrangel's White Armies, nor did it desire the destruction of the Russian Empire. Since Petlura's assurances regarding the general desire of the Ukrainian people for national independence had proved delusive, Poland was freed from any obligation to fight on for the independence of the Ukraine, and was prepared to give up its interest in the Ukrainian

question, if Russia would cease to interest itself in the Polish-Lithuanian dispute and would agree to give Poland a frontier indispensable for its defence and including districts in which the prevalent culture was distinctly Polish. These talks convinced Radek of the sincerity of our peaceful intentions and dispelled Moscow's fears that Poland was fighting, not so much in its own interests as at the instigation of western-European capitalist circles who were anxious to see the destruction of Bolshevism. Accordingly an understanding was soon afterwards reached that the peace negotiations should be transferred to Riga.

## NEGOTIATIONS IN RIGA

There we met a very different delegation, composed of better qualified persons under the chairmanship of Joffe, an experienced diplomat, and provided with a totally different set of instructions. For Soviet diplomacy does not differ at all from the traditional diplomacy of czarist Russia, which was always complementary to military plans and strategic activities.

In January 1920, after a year of constant Polish victories, the Council of People's Commissars was ready to recognize as in harmony with Russian interests a frontier running a hundred kilometres east of that fixed at Riga; whereas a few months later, when the Soviet armies had advanced to Warsaw, the Bolshevik government prepared the draft treaty presented to us at Minsk, rendering Poland completely dependent on Moscow and making it into a bridge over which the communist revolution might pass to the west. But when the Soviets were again defeated by the Polish army, Moscow sent to Riga a delegation prepared for

a really reasonable compromise, in harmony with the Council of People's Commissars' declaration of January of the same year that "there is no single question, territorial, economic, or other, which could not be solved in a peaceful way through negotiation, mutual concessions and agreement."

On the other hand, the instructions given to the Polish delegation by its Government and Diet when it went to Riga were almost the same as those it had received when it went to Minsk. The Polish nation did not want its relations with Russia to be dependent on the temporary posture of affairs, or on changes of situation at the front. During the world war the great majority of its population had stood fast against the Germans. Even Pilsudski after the fall of the Czar—whom he considered to be the chief enemy of Poland—ceased all co-operation with the Central Powers, for which he was arrested by the Germans and flung into the fortress of Magdeburg. And Poland did not change its anti-German attitude when it had regained its independence. In view of this, then, we desired good neighbourly relations with Russia, if only the grave injury done us at the time of the partitions were even partially made good. Accordingly, the instructions given to the Polish peace delegation charged it to reach a peace which should

"put an end to the struggles which have been carried on by Russia and Poland for the territories in dispute between them, and to establish a basis for good neighbourly relations between the two nations. The State frontier to be determined by a just harmonization of the vital interests of both parties."

## V

The final treaty of peace between Poland and the U.S.S.R. was signed on March 18, 1921. But military operations had been stopped immediately after the signature of the preliminary peace on October 12, 1920. The Polish-Soviet frontier was also preliminarily fixed at the same time. A week earlier a common communique had been issued by the chairmen of the two peace delegations, Messrs. Dabski and Joffe, announcing that an understanding on all fundamental questions had already been reached. In point of fact a decision had been amicably reached on October 5 in the most important matter at issue, viz., the demarcation of those parts of the former territory of Poland detached at the time of the partitions in 1772, 1793 and 1795, which were now to be returned.

The first meeting of the peace conference at Riga took place on September 21. On October 5, fourteen days later, the Soviet delegation, duly authorized by the Council of People's Commissars at Moscow, accepted without modification the frontier line proposed by the Poles. The weather at that time was very fine, military operations might have been continued for another six weeks. The Polish armies were pushing steadily forward. Afterwards and for many years sharp complaints were made against the Polish peace delegation, and myself in particular, as responsible for the formulation of our territorial demands at the conference, for having been over-hasty in arriving at a frontier settlement, instead of prolonging the negotiations until our army had again reached the December 1919 front line. These complaints came from countrymen of ours, natives of the districts left to the Soviet

Union, though they had been offered to Poland by the Union in January 1920.

I never at any time had any feeling of resentment against those who made these complaints. For I understood perfectly how extremely disappointed must have been these whose families had for a century and a half resisted the powerful pressure brought to bear on them by the czarist government, who amidst the harshest persecutions had never ceased to cherish the hope that at last the day of freedom and complete reunion would dawn for the Polish nation, torn apart by three partitions—when now, after rejoicing for nearly a year at the sight of Polish administrative officials, schools and soldiers in their towns, villages and countryside, they found themselves handed back, by the Polish-Soviet peace treaty, to a foreign totalitarian government more ruthless than the former czarist regime.

#### RIGA TREATY BASIS FOR LASTING PEACE

In point of fact the Bolshevik government carried out such harsh measures directed to the extermination of Polish civilization from the districts east of the frontier fixed at Riga, that in eighteen years it reduced the number of Polish inhabitants from a million and a half to 626,000. Between ten and twenty thousand of the population relinquished their landed possessions, their houses and their undertakings, and withdrew to Poland. But frequently they left near relatives behind, and afterwards lived in constant fear concerning their fate, and with immeasurable longing for their native soil. It was only too natural that they should not feel particularly grateful to the authors of the

Treaty of Riga. And instead of taking it ill of the few who gave public expression to their resentment against me and my comrades on the Riga delegation, I felt deep respect for the civic discipline of the many who, despite the great personal losses they had suffered in consequence of the exclusion of their native places from Poland, yet said, "Thank God that we have at any rate lived to see our Country's independence !"

*And now that I have mentioned my critics in connection with the Treaty of Riga, I must admit that if we had, by prolonging the peace negotiations, given our army the necessary time to push a further hundred kilometres to the east, the Soviet Union would indeed according to all the available data, have agreed to a frontier with Poland along the armistice line, it had proposed in January, 1920, through Dryssa and Bar*

*Why did we not follow this procedure ?*

*Because we had not come to Riga with instructions to secure for Poland the greatest possible extent of territory and the farthest possible frontier towards the east, but with instructions to "establish a basis for good neighborly relations between the two nations," by making a peace "without victors and vanquished," based on "a just harmonization of the vital interests of both parties."*

The Polish delegation at Riga was composed not only of Chairman, Vice-Minister Dabski and representatives of the six parties in the Diet,<sup>1</sup> but also of three representatives of Head of the State and Commander-in-Chief Pilsudski : General Kulinski and Messrs. Wasilewski and Kamieniecki. And I can say that all three of them co-operated honestly and successfully with the

---

<sup>1</sup> Peasant Party, deputy Kiernik; Polish Socialist Party, deputy Barlicki; Christian Democracy, deputy Wichlinski; National Labour Party, Waszkiewicz; Christian-Nationalist Fraction, Mieczkowski; and People's Union, myself.

representatives of the political parties to conclude peace within the shorter possible time and bring military operations to an end in accordance with the above instructions. There is no truth in the story that Pilsudski was inspired by particular hatred of Russia, or had imperialistic designs of conquest. When, despite the assurances of Petlura and Makhno of a coming nationalist uprising in the Ukraine, the thirty million population furnished less than forty thousand sabres to fight for its independence, Pilsudski concluded that he must relinquish his federal programme; for it would be impossible to set up national Ukrainian and White-Ruthenian States by Polish armed force when the great majority of the population showed no patriotic feeling. He did, therefore, relinquish it sincerely and boldly.

He had desired a federation with Poland, based on the real will of the population, of regions which had once before been united with it in a voluntary union. And so he had desired to liberate them from the Russian rule that had been forced upon them at the partitions by the Czars and after the revolution by the Red Army. But when the realization of this project turned out to be impossible owing to lack of support from the masses of White-Ruthenian and Ukrainian peasants, whose national consciousness was undeveloped—he recognized the necessity of basing the security of Poland not on its separation from Russia by buffer States such as an independent Ukraine and White-Ruthenia would have been, but on permanent peace with Russia. And the reality of such a desire was not to be determined by the existence of any temporary front line. Accordingly, the Polish delegation did not make its territorial claims dependent on the development of military ope-



rations. And there was no difference over this question between the representatives of the six parliamentary parties and the representatives of the High Command.

## POLISH POINT OF VIEW

During the first ten days of the peace negotiations there were several plenary meetings of the conference. at which the delegates of both sides set forth the principles on which they proposed to base a treaty of peace. The Polish delegation put forward its programme on September 24. Following the instructions which had been given them, they declared :

“The demarcation of a frontier between the negotiating parties in the territories detached from the Polish Republic by the former Russian Empire should be based on an equal regard by both parties for the following principles: (a) The termination of the struggle between Poland and Russia for the territories in dispute between them, and the establishment of a basis for good neighborly relations. The State frontier should not be determined by reference to historical claims, but by a just harmonization of the vital interests of both the negotiating parties. (b) The just solution of questions of nationality in the above territories in accordance with democratic principles. (c) The permanent assurance of each of the negotiating States against the possibility of attack by the other. Because Poland desires a freely negotiated peace and has no wish to dictate its conditions, it proposes to the other party a common determination of the frontier on the basis of the above principles.”

There were, however, other subjects for discussion at Riga besides the question of the Polish-Soviet frontier. A number of fundamental questions were dealt with in the preliminary negotiations; e.g. the right of Poland to a portion of the gold in the former Imperial Bank of Russia; the return of libraries and works of

art carried off from Poland to Russia at various times; the insurance of each of the two countries against interference by the other in its domestic affairs; and the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens deported into the interior of Russia during the military operations of 1915. All these questions were dealt with by separate committees appointed from the ranks of each delegation and including also experts, which met for discussion. I was chairman of the Polish committee which drew up the proposals for our future eastern frontier.

## CRUCIAL DAYS

As a general rule in negotiations of this kind each side at first puts forward its maximum demands, which are afterwards gradually reduced in response to pressure from the other side. This was the course followed by the Russian delegation. At the plenary session on September 28, Mr. Joffe proposed to us the same frontier the Russians had sought to force upon us at Minsk. But as he met with determined opposition, he declared only four days later that the greatest territorial concessions he was authorized to make extended to the railway line connecting Brody, Równe, Sarney, Luniniec and Baranowieze; a line closely approximating to the frontier as finally determined.

We, for our part, proceeded differently. The Polish frontier committee considered that if the peace treaty concluded by us was really to be a basis for good neighbourly relations, it should not be the outcome of a trial of strength, or the exploitation of a temporary military superiority of one side or the other, but must

embody a reasonable compromise between the actual, permanent vital interests of both parties. Consequently we decided to put forward, not several variants between our maximum and minimum territorial demands, but a single project for the equitable demarcation of a frontier in the territory taken from Poland by the former Russian Empire at the time of the three partitions.

This demarcation, we thought, should be made by reference, not to historical claims, but to the actually existing state of affairs, as expressed above all in the desire of the population of the various sections of the territory in dispute for incorporation with Poland or Russia respectively.

For it seemed to us indisputable that, if one of those States should incorporate districts, a considerable majority of whose population desired to break away from it and unite with the other, the resultant situation would be an ever-smouldering source of conflict and sooner or later would lead to open war.

The most trustworthy indications of the real state of affairs in this respect we took to be the results of elections to the Duma and the national composition of the *zemstva* and municipal autonomous councils. At the first, and only really free, elections to the Duma in 1906, all the seven representatives in the government of Wilno (which included besides the modern voivodship of Wilno a portion of that of Nowogródek) were Poles.<sup>1</sup> In the Government of Minsk, to which belonged the eastern portion of the modern voivodship of Nowogródek, seven out of nine representatives were

---

<sup>1</sup> Ropp, Jalowicki, Jankowski, Aleksandrowicz, Yotowiecki, Hrynciewicz and Weslawski.

Poles<sup>2</sup>; and in that of Grodno, with which was incorporated a portion of the modern voivodship of Białystok and almost the whole of the voivodship of Polesie, three out of seven elected representatives were Poles.<sup>3</sup> Further, the mayors of the two largest towns in White Ruthenia, Wilno and Minsk, were constantly Poles. And in the *zemstva* of the government of Wilno of those days the Poles had everywhere about 50 per cent. of the seats, and more than 55 per cent. in the three districts of Wilno, Swiecieany and Dzisna. In the government of Minsk, in only three *zemstva* (those of Bobruysk, Ryechitsa and Mozyr) did the Poles hold as few as 20-25 per cent. of the seats, while in two (Pinsk, Slutsk, Nowogródek and Minsk) more than 55 per cent. But in districts much further to the east such as Dryssa and Lepel in the government of Vitebsk, and Orsha in the government of Mogilyev there were more than 45 per cent. of Poles in the *zemstva*.

Taking these facts into consideration, we had every right to include in the area of prevalently Polish civilization the whole of the then Russian government of Wilno and the districts of Borysov, Igumen, Pinsk, Slutsk, Nowogródek, and Minsk in the government of Minsk. Nevertheless, of these last six districts we laid claim only to Pinsk and Nowogródek, leaving the rest outside.

## ETHNOGRAPHY OF EASTERN POLAND

This we did because we took into account the future as well as the past. In the Russian Empire there was no universal franchise; and at elections to the Duma,

---

<sup>2</sup> Lednicki, Lubecki, Janczewski, Lubanski, Skirmunt. Wiszniewski, and Massonius.

<sup>3</sup> Zukowski, Kurop, and Sagailo.

the *zemstva*, and the local autonomous councils, the chief influence was exercised by the possessing and educated classes. It is very noteworthy in this connection that the local peasants and townsfolk preferred to put their confidence in representatives from the educated Polish classes, rather than from the Russian. But we could not overlook the fact that in the democratic Polish Republic, which had universal franchise and in which agrarian reform was already being taken in hand (having been unanimously approved by the Diet six months earlier), the thoughts and emotions of the broadest masses of the people would constitute an increasingly important factor in political life. Nor the further fact that nationalist feeling scarcely existed among the White Ruthenians, and their leaning towards Polish or Russian civilization was dependent almost entirely on their attachment to the Catholic or the Orthodox Church. So first the Committee of which I was chairman, and afterwards the whole Polish delegation, accepted the principle that only that part of White Ruthenia should be incorporated in Poland, where the Catholic population was in the majority. We were scrupulous in counting only White-Ruthenian Catholics in the area in question, so as not to make up a majority by including Poles, and we did not press for the incorporation in Poland of even so strong a centre of Polish culture as Minsk, which, as I have just said, always elected Poles to the Russian Duma, and to the presidency of the municipal council. For had we included Minsk, we should have had to include also some districts in which, though they usually elected Poles to the Duma and the *zemstva*, yet more than 75 per cent. of the population were Orthodox. Following these

two indications, viz., the confidence of the local population in Polish deputies as shown at the elections to the Duma and the autonomous councils, and the religious bond between White-Ruthenian Catholics and Poland (for they always used Polish prayer-books in church and sang the hymns in Polish), the territorial committee of the Polish delegation worked out a project for a frontier which should include on the Polish side the follownig parts of White Ruthenia: the whole of the former Russian government of Wilno, where the majority of the population were not only Catholic but Polish; and, of the former governments of Grodno and Minsk, the areas of the present voivodship of Bialystok, Nowogródek, and (in part) Polesie.

Throughout this area the Catholic population is in a decided majority.

Possibly the foreign reader may be inclined to doubt the accuracy of the Polish statistics of nationality in an area where the national consciousness of the population is so little developed. But even the least conscious politically do not make false statements concerning their religion if they are sincere in their belief. And both the Catholic and the Orthodox population in Poland were always and are deeply religious and strongly attached to their churches. So the statistics of their religious adherence cannot be subject to doubt.

Now, according to the census of 1931, there were 2,090,000 Catholics and 1,690,000 Orthodox in the voivodships of Bialystok, Wilno, and Nowogródek which constituted the western part of the region with a White-Ruthenian population, incorporated with Poland by the Treaty of Riga. Russia could not put forward any serious claim, political, nationalist, or religious, to

this territory, which embraced 78,000 square kilometres and had a population in 1931 of 3,686,000. For of the seventeen members by which it was represented in the Duma, the Russians, at (I repeat) the only free elections, in 1906, elected only three. And according to official Russian statistics the Russian language was used in daily life of scarcely 5 per cent. of the population of the government of Wilno ; by 5.08 per cent. of that of Grodno; and by 4.39 per cent, of that of Minsk.

### LITHUANIAN PROBLEM

Accordingly, feeling their position in this region insecure, the Soviet Union had, in the spring of 1920. surrendered the town and the greatest part of the former government of Wilno to Lithuania, in order to exclude from White Ruthenia the strongest centre of that Polish civilization which prevailed in its western districts. Yet the right of Lithuania to Wilno and the region round about was and is no greater than that of Russia. According to figures given by the Germans after their registration of the population in territories of the Russian Empire which they occupied in 1916, the percentage of Lithuanians was as follows: in the town of Wilno 2.6 per cent.; in the district of Wilno 4.3 per cent.; in the town of Grodno 2.4 per cent.; in the district of Grodno 0.5 per cent.

I believe that anyone who desires to arrive at an impartial judgment on our Riga peace negotiations with Russia will at most reproach us with too great moderation in formulating our claims to parts of White Ruthenia, and will certainly not accuse us of excessive greed.

The northern part of the eastern frontier we asked for was so fully justified by the undoubted bias towards

Poland shown by the population to the west of it, that the only objection which Mr. Joffe, the chairman of the Soviet delegation, could bring against it was to point out that the right of Lithuania to a considerable portion of this territory had been recognized by the Soviet Union not long before. However, he soon agreed to the removal of the resulting difficulties for the U.S.S.R. by the insertion of the following statement in the draft peace treaty immediately after the description of the frontier :—

“The two Contracting Parties agree that, in so far as the territory situated to the west of the frontier fixed in Article 2 of the present Treaty includes districts which form the subject of a dispute between Poland and Lithuania, the question of the attribution of these districts to one of those two States is a matter which exclusively concerns Poland and Lithuania.”

## UKRAINIAN PROBLEM

It was a much more complicated problem to demarcate the frontier between Poland and the U.S.S.R. in the southern portion of the region taken from Poland at the time of the partitions, and inhabited for the most part by an Ukrainian population. For, whereas to the north of the Pripet, in Polish White-Ruthenian territory, the influence of Polish civilization is to be felt prevalently in the west, and the further east one goes the weaker it becomes—to the south the strongest centres of Polish civilization and influence were scattered, and as a rule were actually most numerous in the east. In Czarist times this region was divided between the three governments of Volhynia, Podolia, and Kiev. The last-named was the most strongly russified. But even there the Poles had about 50 per cent of the seats in the *zemstva* of one district (Lipo-



vets), and about 40 per cent. in three other (Berdichev, Skvira, and Tarashcha). Further, the Poles held 50 per cent. and more of the seats in the *zemstva* of the districts of Yampol, Haysin, Proskurov, Lityn, Latychev, Ushitsa, and Kamenets Podolski in the government of Podolia, and the districts of Starokonstantynov, Zaslavl, and Wlodzimierz in the government of Volhynia. In the remainder of this government. i.e., in the districts of Ostrog, Rowne, Krzemieniec, Dubno, Luck, Kowel and Zhitomir, the Poles held between 35 and 45 per cent. of the seats in the *zemstva*.

Had all the districts where the Poles had 50 per cent. and more of the seats in the *zemstva* been united to Poland, the southern section of the Polish-Soviet frontier, would have run much further east than in the sector to the north of the Pripet. Moreover, the south-eastern border of Poland would have taken in a country of almost 100,000 square kilometres, where about 75 per cent. of the entire population was composed of three and a half million Orthodox Ukrainians; and as the fundamentally democratic and liberal structure of Poland would rapidly have led to the rise of an educated class from the masses of the people, a strong national consciousness would soon have developed. Despite the sincere intention of the Polish State not to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Soviet Union, and in particular not to interfere in the Russo-Ukrainian problem, yet the existence of so large an Orthodox Ukrainian population of rapidly growing nationalist tendencies would inevitably have inspired Moscow with the fear that a strong and dangerous centre of Ukrainian irredentism might be established in Poland.

Sincerely desiring a peace which should lay the foundations of permanent good relations between Poland and Russia, the Polish delegation decided at my suggestion not to push the southernmost sector of the frontier further east than the old eastern frontier of Galicia, which had belonged to Poland from the middle of the 14th century, and had never belonged to Russia. Even in the peace conditions proposed to us at Minsk the Soviet Union had laid no claim to it, and its population, apart from the Jews, was Catholic irrespective of differences of nationality. The eastern border district now forming the voivodship of Tarnopol was particularly strongly influenced by Polish civilization.

According to the Austrian statistics of 1910, the percentage of Poles in the various districts on this border was as follows: Czortków, 39.1; Przemyslan, 39.5; Kamionka Strumilowa, 40.3; Brzezany, 40.9; Husiatyn, 44.2; Zbaraz, 46.7; Buczacz, 46.7; Tarnopol, 48; Trembowla, 51; and Skalat, 52.

The two strongest bastions of Polish civilization in Polish White Ruthenia and the Polish Ukraine regions of mixed population, two Polish Ulsters as one might say—were the eastern borderland of Galicia, in which the chief town was Tarnopol; and the western portion of the White-Ruthenian area, with the important scientific, literary, and artistic centre of Wilno.

The most cursory glance at the map will show that the primary condition of security for Poland was the linking of the eastern frontiers of these two bastions by a defensive line running from the north-east corner of the present voivodship of Tarnopol to the south-eastern corner of the present voivodship of Nowogródek.

## RAILROAD CONTROVERSY

This line did indeed cause a few days' argument between the two peace delegations. On October 1, 1920, Mr. Joffe informed Mr. Dabski that his instructions did not permit him to agree to a frontier east of the railway line Brody, Rowne, Sarny, Luniniec, Baranowicze, which should be left in Soviet hands. The next day Mr. Dabski put before him the Polish project for a frontier including on the Polish side the above-named railway together with a sixty-or seventy-kilometre-wide security strip to the east of it. At the same time he declared :

" I do not wish to proceed in the usual way, by suggesting a frontier-line further to the east and then gradually withdrawing it westwards until I have reached the maximum we are prepared to yield. I prefer at once to describe the line beyond which we are in no case prepared to withdraw."

On October 3 a conversation took place between Mr. Joffe, Mr. Dabski, deputies Barlicki, Kiernik and myself. Mr. Joffe asked me how I justified the claim that the railway line should be given to Poland rather than to Russia. I replied that Russia with its population of 150 millions would never need to fear aggression on the part of Poland with its 30 millions; whereas the numerically stronger Russia might some day display aggressive tendencies against Poland, in which case not Russia but Poland would need the best possible defensive line together with the strategically important railway behind it. Continuing, Mr. Joffe asked what guarantee we could give him that Poland would not let itself be pushed into war with the Soviet Union by the western capitalist world. To this my answer was as follows :

"The best and surest guarantee of the action of States is given by a consideration of their interests. Now, the interests of Poland do not allow it to join in any kind of military co-operation with Germany. And the idea that Great Britain or France would ever send armies to Poland to join in a common expedition against Moscow is ridiculous. Further, if Poland concludes a treaty with Soviet Russia demarcating the frontier it desires, it will not be so foolish as to help anyone to overthrow the government in Russia which signed the treaty, and to set up another government there, which would not feel bound by the treaty."

Mr. Joffe then informed me that in view of these explanations he would put our frontier proposal before the Council of People's Commissars. Two days later, on October 5, he informed us that the Council of People's Commissars had empowered him to accept our proposal in its entirety, if the Polish deligation would agree to reduce their claim to a portion of the gold in the former Imperial Bank of Russia. How typical of Russians to make a condition like this! Russia apparently had more interest in keeping the largest possible reserve of gold than in keeping the territories claimed by us, where Polish culture was indubitably predominant.

## TREATY OF RIGA

After the preliminary peace had been signed on October 12, 1920, the Polish delegation, composed of representatives of the political parties in the Diet, returned to Warsaw. Shortly afterwards a fresh delegation, composed of officials and experts, came to Riga to conclude a definitive treaty of peace. As before, its chairman was Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Dabski.

After the signing of this definitive treaty, which was only slightly more comprehensive than the very detailed preliminary draft, Mr. Dabski made the following declaration :

“The Peace Treaty which we have just signed marks the beginning and forms the foundation of a new period in the life and development of the Polish and Russian nations. After a century of Polish struggle for independence, after two years of a severe war, there comes a period of peace and mutual collaboration. . . . We have endeavoured to settle all problems in a spirit of fairness and justice, making concessions not only in order to reach agreement, but also to facilitate our future relations.”

For his part Mr. Joffe declared :

“We have concluded a peace treaty giving full satisfaction to the vital, legitimate and necessary interests of the Polish nation. . . . The peace negotiations lasted several months, and encountered considerable difficulties, especially in the settlement of economic and financial problems.<sup>1</sup> I must state, however, that both when guns were firing along the front line and blood was being shed, and during calmer periods, the knowledge of affairs and tact displayed by the Polish Delegation and particularly by its Chairman have assisted both the progress of the negotiations and their final satisfactory conclusion.”

Thus in concluding the Peace of Riga we made great sacrifices—not under compulsion, but in accordance with our own free decision—in order to assure permanent peaceful relations with Russia. In no small degree I was responsible for this decision. For nineteen years I calmly bore the criticism to which I was subjected on that account, for I thought that permanent peace had really been established on our eastern borders. In 1932 a pact of non-aggression was concluded between

---

<sup>1</sup> Noteworthy words, showing as they do that the frontier negotiations encountered no particular difficulties.

Poland and the U.S.S.R., and in 1934 this pact was renewed and extended to December 1945.

But afterwards, when the German offer of a fresh partition of Poland was so quickly accepted by the U.S.S.R. in 1939, and in consequence I found myself along with hundreds of thousands of others of my countrymen in a Soviet gaol, sometimes, reviewing my life as I lay alone in my cell, I sadly asked myself whether, I had done right in exacting from a million and a half Poles the heavy sacrifice of remaining outside the borders of their country in order to establish permanently peaceful relations with Russia, which had now proved a delusion. However, in July 1941, General Sikorski concluded an agreement with the Soviet Government annulling the Russo-German treaty for the partition of Poland, and with it the Ribbentrop-Molotov line of demarcation. And then again I said to my countrymen: You see, no Russo-German understanding can be permanent; while a proper understanding of the true interests of the Polish and Russian nations bids them, maintain good neighbourly mutual relations and the widest political co-operation.

But, notwithstanding the fact that we were engaged in a common struggle against the Germans, the Polish-Russian co-operation initiated by General Sikorski did not last long. Today it is non-existent.

#### FAITH IN POLISH-RUSSIAN COLLABORATION

And yet I sincerely believe that the logic of facts will lead, if not before the end of the war, at any rate after it, to the re-establishment of good relations between Poland and Russia. But this will not be accomplished by means of fresh sacrifices on the part of Poland. The experience of the last five years has

taught us only too clearly that sacrifices made by the Polish nation for the sake of Polish-Russian friendship merely weaken Poland without diminishing the imperialist tendencies of Russia. Having convinced itself of the uselessness of the sacrifices made in 1920, the Polish nation will in no case agree to unilateral concessions. For it could not possibly put faith in the permanence of any fresh treaty of peace or of any new frontier determined by it, if the precedent set by Russia in unilaterally cancelling the Treaty of Riga and violating the frontier fixed by it were allowed to go unchallenged.

In 1920 we left about a million and a half Poles beyond the border, in the U.S.S.R. Now another million Polish citizens have been deported beyond the Urals, of whom about 115,000 left Russia in 1942, and are now in the Polish forces or in settlements for women, children, old people and other civilians. I hope that not more than one-third of those left behind have died of want, and that therefore about half a million are still alive. Are we finally to abandon them? Today the U.S.S.R. is putting forward claims to the whole of that part of Poland assigned to it by the Ribbentrop-Molotov treaty. This territory was inhabited by 5,274,000 Poles. About 800,000 of these, together with about 200,000 Ukrainians and White Ruthenians, were deported into the interior of Russia in 1940 and 1941. The conduct of the Soviet Government in the part of eastern Poland it occupied from the end of October 1939 to July 1941, leaves no room for doubt that if the present territorial demands of the U.S.S.R. were to be accorded to, it would be equivalent to surrendering more than four million Poles, left in

the eastern voivodships of Poland after the deportations, to the most ruthless extermination. If the Polish nation agreed to that, in truth it would not deserve to survive.

There are people who think that the modification of the frontiers of a State is nothing more than moving a line a few millimetres on a map, whereas in truth it is a question of the most fundamental importance to millions of people.

I ask those of our friends who advise us, with the best intentions, to give up our eastern territories to Soviet Russia, to ask themselves the question whether it is right and just to condemn millions of people who in Poland had their private property protected by the State, freedom of speech, of association, and of political opinion, and the assurance of a religious education for their children at school, to the loss of all these rights by handing them over to a totalitarian State which does not recognize the right to hold private property, in which all political parties except the Communist are prohibited, where a man may be sent without trial (as I was), by mere administrative order, to eight years' compulsory labour camp, and where atheism is taught in the schools.

I repeat once more : good neighbourly relations between Poland and Russia are required, not only by the true interest of the two countries, but also by the interest of permanent European peace. But the only possible basis for such relations lies in the principle put forward by the Polish delegation at Riga : namely, that of equal respect for the vital interests of both sides, and not the injury of the weaker by the stronger, or the unilateral breach of obligations voluntarily undertaken.



## STANISLAW GRABSKI

*Stanislaw Grabski, Ph.D., LL.D., born in 1871, graduated at the Faculty of Law, Warsaw University, post graduate studies in Berlin, Bern and Paris (Ecole des Sciences Politiques). From 1910 professor of economics and political science at Lwow University. Elected to the Polish Diet (Sejm) in 1919 and appointed Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, was three times Minister of Education. Author of numerous works on "Social economy" (1931) in ten volumes, is standard in Poland. A member of the Polish Socialist Party (1887-1895) he worked to make Polish independence part of the socialist program.*

*Imprisoned after the entrance of the Soviet Army into Poland in 1939, he was deported to Russia. Released after Hitler's attack on Russia in 1941, he proceeded to London and is now Chairman of the Polish National Council (the war time Parliament).*

*Prof. S. Grabski is an authority on Russian affairs and a strong believer in collaboration with Russia. In this pamphlet he discusses the Polish-Russian frontier established by the Treaty of Riga in 1921. As a member of the Polish delegation at the peace conference in Minsk and Riga, Mr. Grabski was a participant in the events he discusses.*

*Prof. S. Grabski is the younger brother of the late Prof. Wladyslaw Grabski, three times Prime Minister of Poland, who headed the Polish delegation to the Spa Conference.*

Rs. a. p.

- I.P.L. 10. EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES IN  
POLISH HISTORY by Paul Super .. 2 0 0
- „ 11. WHAT POLAND WANTS by I.  
Matuszewski .. .. 0 12 0
- „ 12. POLISH QUESTION by F. A. Voigt ..

The University Library,

ALLAHABAD.

Accession No. \_\_\_\_\_

10339

Section No. \_\_\_\_\_

7548

17

(Form No. 28-L 5000—'43.)

- „ 21. THE POLISH CONSPIRACY? by  
H. W. Henderson .. 0 8 0
- „ 22. THE POLISH PRO-  
VINCES by W. Wielhorski .. 0 8 0
- „ 23. THE POLISH SOVIET FRONTIER  
by S. Grabski .. .. 1 8 0